

# GREENWorks

## Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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### Red, White and Green?

#### 5 Tips for an Environmentally Friendly Fourth of July

As the celebration of our Nation's independence is fast approaching and we gear our psyches towards our most patriotic-mindsets, consider celebrating America by helping to protect it. In red, white and green fashion, gear your family celebration towards the environment with these five steps:

**1. Recycle and Reuse: Dishes-**A daunting pile of dirty dishes can feel intimidating at the end of a day-long celebration but ditching the single-use dishware, silverware and cups can not only help the environment but also your wallet. Over the course of one year Americans use 430,000,000,000 units of single-use food and drink containers. That equates to about 140,000 units each second. Using plates from your house can help keep these items out of the landfill while also saving you money. If you are still scared of the pile of dishes awaiting you at the end of the day, have party with a "bring your own plate" theme. This reduces your dish washing responsibility and also serves as a good conversation topic when comparing plates. If you must use single-use items, please remember to recycle all plastics.

**Decorations-**Honoring our nation's independence encourages exhibits of bold streamers, paper decorations, table cloths and more red, white and blue paraphernalia. This year, consider saving your streamers and decorations and reusing them year after year. Wipe down your table cloths and reduce your waste output and spending by storing them for your next party or Fourth of July BBQ.

**2. Food: Grilling-**This Fourth of July there will be over 36 million BBQs across the country, according to BIGresearch. Keep in mind that using propane is the most environmentally friendly option for your grill. It emits 349 kg of carbon into the atmosphere instead of the 998 kg charcoal produces, according to the Environmental Impact Assessment Review. Choosing a tank with a trade-in option usually includes a financial incentive as well.

**Local and Seasonal-**Would you believe that 150 million hot dogs will be consumed on the Fourth of July; enough hot dogs to cover the distance from Washington D.C. to Los Angeles five times? The number of miles the food traveled to get to your plate isn't small either. The average meal travels 1,500 miles before it reaches your plate. Support local agriculture by shopping at your local farmers' markets as much as possible. Buying seasonal foods can also reduce your carbon footprint because your food won't be shipped

from warmer climates. Luckily, many Fourth of July favorites are in season during the month: corn, blueberries, strawberries and many other fruits and veggies, and a growing variety of locally raised meats.

**3. Drink:** 29 billion water bottles are bought each year. One of the simplest ways to be greener this fourth is to ditch the single serving drink containers and buy larger ones while providing cups or having guests bring their own glasses. If you still must use plastic, again make sure you provide a recycling bin. Sadly, of the 29 billion water bottles sold each year only 13 percent of them are recycled.

**4. Be Outside:** If the weather cooperates, move your party outside and you will save on your home energy costs. In New England, the threat of mosquitoes and ticks is real. When protecting from bugs use a spray without DEET. DEET contains neurotoxins which some scientists think have long-term health effects. DEET also has known effects on rainbow trout, tilapia and zooplankton. Try using lemon eucalyptus oil or soy oil products as an alternative.

**5. Fireworks:** Nothing says America quite like fireworks but it is a well known fact fireworks are bad for the environment. The large amount of carbon being released from the explosions hurts the ozone. Fireworks also release gases and debris, which, as they burn, fall back to the earth, littering it while contaminating aquatic ecosystems and poisoning wildlife. These contaminated wildlife work their way up the food chain and sometimes find themselves on your plate. Fireworks also contaminate the smell and taste of drinking water. Try to attend local firework shows to avoid extra spread of these contaminants. If you decide to use personal fireworks always light them off away from water bodies and use nitrogen rich fireworks, which produce less smoke.

We should all take pride in and enjoy celebrating our nation's independence day, but with some small changes to the way we recognize the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, we can all be singing "America the Beautiful" for generations to come.

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